

Budget Advisory Committee

The Budget Advisory Committee (“BAC” or the “Committee”) completed its review of the 2006 municipal budget in early January. At our initial organizational meeting, the BAC was charged with review of municipal appropriations, both recurring and non-recurring items. The County and MSAD #75 school budgets, and salaries and wages for Town employees are not under the scope of the BAC.

In reviewing the municipal budget, the BAC built on the process developed in the prior year. This included prioritizing and scheduling budget component reviews by greatest percentage of financial resources requested or consumed and assessing individual funding requests based on amount needed.

The Committee initially recommended to the Selectmen a municipal budget totaling approximately 6.85% higher than that adopted by Town meeting for 2005. Debt Service in 2006 will decrease by approximately 7% due to an anomaly in the debt repayment schedule. The Selectmen continue to make modifications to the budget.

If there is one common denominator pushing nearly all budgets higher it is the increased costs of energy. This factor played out in all departments to a greater or lesser extent pushing the overall budget upwards. The municipal building has increased costs for HVAC, electricity and heating fuel, as do libraries in Town. Employees who travel for their job must have gasoline expenses increased, as do Town maintenance vehicles and fire departments. The Town currently buys fuel in bulk, which benefits many municipal departments, as well as the low income when in need of emergency home heating assistance.

With respect to individual departments, (energy costs excepted), many budgets were similar to the past year or two. Overall, there was an attempt to be conservative in operating expenses and prudent in capital reserves. The BAC looked for ways to save money in daily operations while moving ahead on needed improvements or special projects approved by voters in the previous Town Meeting. Some of these projects are defined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Some notable changes to the previous year’s budget follow.

- A new line item for Registrar of Voters was approved.
- Assessing budget has increased due to a change in personnel to one full-time assessor, one part-time assessor and limited office assistance.
- The Recycling Center five-year capital plan was updated. Revenues from the Recycling Center have increased over previous years. An additional amount is needed to cover pumping leachate holding tanks and for purchasing compost bins.
- Fire Departments: Cundy’s, Orrs and Bailey Islands, and Harpswell Neck, each requested an increase in operating budgets due to fuel costs as well as the need to update equipment.
- Orrs/Bailey Island Fire Department requested additional money for roof replacement.

- Emergency Services/Advanced Life Support have increased both due to gasoline costs and to the increase in the number of service calls. The Town is committed to providing emergency services to anyone in need, regardless of their financial circumstances.
- Library budgets: Curtis Memorial's increase will put the Town at its share of 10%. Cundy's and Orr's Libraries' operating budgets are a modest increase.
- West Harpswell Library has been proposed with a Town contribution equal to that of the other Town libraries. Curtis Memorial Library has agreed to assist in the set-up and with book and computer donations. The exact site of the library is to be determined although a house near Mitchell Field is under consideration.
- Harpswell Community Broadcast presented their budget. The operating expenses were the same as the last two years with new money requested for a generator. Other money is reserved in a capital account for digital conversion.
- Cumberland County Sheriff's budget, including Communications and Summer contracts, was accepted with no money for a new vehicle this year.
- Marine Patrol was budgeted for one patrol warden with no vehicle. This decrease from two to one warden resulted in increasing the line item for clam flat survey.
- The Harbormaster (now a fulltime position) requested an increased budget for equipment, including new moorings. Money was reserved for motor replacement,
- Road Maintenance budget is increased to maintain and repair Town owned roads. Signs are needed in additional locations.
- Capital Reserves: Road reconstruction costs will be covered with monies raised and appropriated and the rest bonded for full or partial reconstruction of specified roads.
- Special Projects: Mitchell Field. A short-term plan from the Recreation Committee was presented to include a variety of sports and activities.
- General Assistance or welfare budget has increased 30% in direct response to need.

We were pleased with the information provided to us by each of the Town departments and by those outside organizations making requests of the Town. The representatives making verbal presentations to the Committee were extremely helpful to us in our efforts. We greatly appreciate the professionalism of the Town Administrator Kristi Eiane, her staff and we particularly wish to thank Budget Coordinator Linda Strickland and Treasurer Marguerite Kelly for their invaluable assistance to us.

Planning Board

During 2005 the Planning Board held 11 meetings and heard 31 applications. On site inspections were performed at 26 properties. The Board also held two workshops to discuss procedural matters and proposed ordinance changes. A third workshop was held with a DEP staff member specializing in shoreline zoning.

Reflecting demand for Harpswell coastal property, applications to reconstruct non-conforming structures increased from 8 in 2004 to 13 in 2005. Of these, 5 were approved, 3 approved with conditions, 1 was an additional approval to a previously approved application, and 4 were denied. There were 8 site plan reviews of which 4 were approved, 1 approved with conditions, 1 tabled and 2 withdrawn.

Additionally, there were 7 subdivision hearings, all amendments to existing subdivisions, all of which were approved. There was 1 application for land use in the shoreline zone, which was approved and, finally, 2 wharf hearings, 1 approved and 1 approved with conditions.

With the able support and guidance of the Town Planner and Planning Assistant, the Board further enlarged its role in land use planning, proposing new ordinances or modifications to existing ones. Meetings were held with the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee with the Board acting as a resource in the development of new ordinances and changes to existing ordinances, so necessary if Harpswell is to effectively manage future growth and preserve its community character.

The Planning Board is composed of 5 members and 2 associates. Currently, a vacancy exists for an associate member and interested citizens are encouraged to apply at the Town Office. The Board wishes to acknowledge the thoughtful interest, support and counsel of Sam Alexander, our Selectman liaison, and Board alumnus.

Board of Appeals

The Board of Appeals met four times in 2005 and received three applications for variances, one administrative appeal of a decision by the Codes Enforcement Office, and one appeal of a Planning Board decision. One variance was approved and two denied. The administrative appeal was denied. The appeal of the Planning Board's decision was also denied.

The Board thanks both Reed Coles for his long service on the Board, and Karen O'Connell for her attention to detail as Recording Secretary, both having recently left their positions.

The Board also recognizes the fine work of Planning Assistant Marsha Hinton and Codes Enforcement Officers Terri Sawyer and Bill Wells.

Conservation Commission

The Harpswell Conservation Commission has the responsibility of conducting research and giving advice that will help better utilize, protect, and plan for the Town's natural resources and open areas. The Conservation Commission seeks to coordinate its activities with existing Town committees, departments, and with other conservation bodies.

The Commission continues to educate and sponsor conservation projects to protect water resources and natural areas. The rain barrel program, initiated in 2004 and continued into 2005, attracted 20 additional residents. Bait barrels, a design sheet, and a parts list were provided for conversion into rain barrels. A local bait company provided the barrels.

Compost added to the soil increases water absorption as well as enriching it. In 2005, an additional 160 residents purchased the "Earth Machine", a well designed compost bin that turns kitchen scraps, grass clippings and dead leaves into a dark, crumbly, earthy-smelling product that is perfect for adding to Harpswell's predominantly clay soils. Users are amazed at how much it has cut down on what they take to the recycling center. In 2006 the Commission will continue to work with the Recycling Center to offer the backyard composters. Not only do the owners benefit from the rich compost, but also their use saves tax dollars by reducing the waste that is trucked out of Town. In the coming year the Recycling Center will have additional composters available for those who missed the ordering period.



Photo by Tony Barrett
Rhonda Weaver and volunteer,
Wes Wood, loading her new composter.

The Commission is working with the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee by agreeing to undertake the Open Space Plan, a mandated section of Harpswell's Comprehensive Plan. In order to gather citizen's views on these issues, the Commission worked with the Recreation Committee in crafting the *Recreation & Open Space Survey*. Please fill out the green survey form (available at Town Meeting or the Town Office) to provide your views on Open Space.

An Adopt-a-Road program is being established in Harpswell to encourage resident and groups to recognize the advantages of litter-free roadways. Initially it will cover Routes 24 and 123, Mountain Road and Cundy's Harbor Road. Many of us have seen private individuals, bags in hand, picking up litter along Harpswell's roads. There are also informal pickups made by groups in the spring around "Earth Day." The new program will concentrate on safe removal of trash and recognition of individuals and groups who work to keep Harpswell's roadways litter-free. Watch the Town's website, <http://www.harpswell.maine.gov/> for information or to become a part of the program. Commission members continue to be active on the Town Lands, Recreation, and Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committees to coordinate efforts and re-enforce its mission. Two members are Trustees on the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust.

Town residents interested in supporting the Commission's efforts are encouraged to contact any Commissioner or attend a monthly meeting, the third Tuesday of the month.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC) was appointed by the Selectmen in April 2005, to begin implementing the Comprehensive Plan Update of 2005, adopted by the March 2005 Town Meeting. Under the guidance of its first Chairman, Reed Coles, and Town Planner, Jay Chace, the Committee first identified many action items that could be handled by various Town committees, such as the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, and the Recreation Committee.

Then the CPIC itself worked to develop ordinance changes that would implement the plan's fundamental goals for managing future growth as identified by Townspeople - preservation of the rural character of the Town, preservation and enhancement of vibrant villages where future growth will be particularly encouraged, and measures such as affordable housing that will help to preserve our diverse population.

A series of public meetings and published articles will be used to help the Committee inform Townspeople of its proposals. The Committee plans to incorporate citizen comments as we prepare our recommendations for consideration. We appreciate the feedback received thus far and hope for continued dialogue with you.

Housing Sub-Committee

The Committee began meeting last fall (2005) and regularly reports to the CPIC on its recommendations.

The Sub-Committee's role, as defined by CPIC and the Comprehensive Plan, includes: (1) exploring the creation of a public program for affordable housing; (2) encouraging affordable housing in new subdivisions; (3) enabling subdivisions to provide some affordable housing or contribution toward affordable housing; (4) and "develop[ing] a plan for the use of the two dwellings and their land when they are finally given over to the Town." (Harpwell Comprehensive Plan, Mitchell Field section).

The Sub-Committee has been working on: (1) a plan for affordable housing units at the .82 acre "Navy" property at Mitchell Field; (2) recommendations on the "in-law apartment" ordinance change; (3) establishment of a support/referral information program to support Harpswell Senior Citizens; (4) an Affordable Housing Ordinance Draft for Harpswell; and (5) creation of a Harpswell Housing Trust as a vehicle for creating affordable housing in Harpswell.

As our Comprehensive Plan outlines that Harpswell should "pursue the development of five to ten new affordable housing units annually over the next ten years," the Sub-Committee believes that a proactive role best serves the Town.

Fire and Ambulance Committee

The Fire and Ambulance Committee is comprised of the operational leaders of the three Fire and EMS organizations of Harpswell and the Town's Emergency Management agent. In addition, one or more representatives of the Town's administration attend meetings to stay abreast of issues facing our emergency responders. Our Committee meets as required by the workload and exists to provide a liaison between the three independent emergency organizations and the Town of Harpswell. This is an important link as all three Fire Departments are independent of the Town and of each other. Although the Town provides partial financial support to these services, it does not own or operate any associated stations or equipment. All three department's volunteers are covered by the Town's Workers Compensation Insurance but are not Town employees per se.

The people of Harpswell are currently served by seven pieces of pumping apparatus, four water tankers, three ambulances and two rescue/utility units. These are typically staffed by around seventy operational responders with additional administrative members. This would be considered large by the standards of most communities of our population but the geographic circumstances of our Town necessitate it.

2005 presented a substantial increase in call volume. Although we have seen steady increases in runs in recent years, there was a pronounced spike in calls for 2005. Most of this is reflected in medical emergencies with some increase in fire calls also. Our call volume totals for 2005 are as follows:

<u>Department</u>	<u>Ambulance</u>	<u>Fire</u>
Cundys Harbor	118	57
Harpswell Neck	134	103
<u>Orrs-Bailey Island</u>	<u>144</u>	<u>50</u>
Total:	396	210

Total calls for all Departments in 2005 were 606. This compares to 503 in 2004.

Harbor & Waterfront Committee

The Harbor and Waterfront Committee welcomed Jim Hays as Harpswell's new Harbormaster.

The main concerns of the Committee have been mooring placement, mooring fees, the reclassification of Harpswell waters, and a Harbor Management Plan. The Harbor Management Plan will include mooring plans for Mackerel Cove and Cundy's Harbor as well as other locations in order to provide additional mooring placements. The Committee reviewed mooring fees and made recommendations to the Selectmen. It will also continue its ongoing review of the Harpswell Harbor and Waterfront Ordinance.

To help the Town protect its 216 miles of coastline from indiscriminate location of moorings, the Committee is creating a map to classify the boundaries of the many harbors in Harpswell. Approval of the map by Harpswell residents will be needed at a future Town Meeting.

Town Lands Committee

The Town Lands Committee has the duties of inventorying, assessing current uses and management of Town properties, and reporting to the Selectmen those findings, and making recommendations for improvements and maintenance of those properties.

To date, the Committee has inventoried and identified Town landings and Town-owned islands, recommended signage for all of the properties, started a pictorial and informational directory of the properties which will be available for the public to view.

We welcome any old photos of the Town and any historical information that anyone wishes to share for the purpose of the directory as well.

The Committee will be working on a television presentation to introduce the public to the Town's lands, and ways in which the public can participate in the stewardship of its properties.

Our work for the remainder of our term includes implementing a system for monitoring the properties and offering opportunities to Harpswell's citizens to participate in the care of its lands. These properties belong to all of us and we encourage anyone with an interest in assisting us in the monitoring process, or keeping us apprised of any property's needs, to please let us know.

The Committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month and public attendance is welcomed.

Marine Resources Report

Most folks don't realize that the softshell clam industry in Harpswell has an estimated commercial value of \$2.2 million dollars annually. The personal and recreational value is just as high but, of course, cannot be measured in dollars. The resource is owned by everyone and State Law mandates that 10% of all licenses be reserved for non-residents. There are 77 resident and 8 nonresident commercial licenses issued.

There is no limit set on the number of recreational licenses so the numbers vary year-to-year. In 2005, 312 residents and 31 non-residents purchased recreational licenses. Most of the commercial diggers work year round and support families by their harvesting. Scores of recreational diggers share the special experience of digging a 'mess' of clams and the reward of a unique self-provided meal throughout the summer.

Unfortunately, coastal communities blessed with this resource are required under State Law to manage and police the resource, and that imposes expense to the Town. To that end, the Town adopted the Harpswell Shellfish ordinance about 25 years ago; it is amended by Town Meeting as times change. The Ordinance mandates the appointment of the Marine Resources Committee to oversee the industry locally.

The Selectmen make appointments to this Committee annually. Residency is a requirement but the Selectmen have traditionally sought balance (commercial and recreational interests) on the committee because the resource belongs to all of us. Some of the responsibilities of the Committee follow:

- Clam flat surveys are conducted annually under a program that includes the scientific analyses of professional marine biologists to ascertain the overall population of clams in Harpswell jurisdiction, thus determining the quantity of licenses that can be supported by the resource.
- Water samples are gathered at various locations throughout the Town on a regular basis and analyzed in the State lab to guard against a number of potential health problems.
- Organized programs to harvest seed clams from fertile areas and transplant them to depleted or unproductive regions in Town are undertaken by the Committee and professional diggers.
- The State has assigned Don Card, a marine biologist with the Department of Marine Resources, to our area and he attends every monthly meeting of the Committee (and he has for years) to offer his expertise as required. Don is involved with every reseeded project and conservation closure.

The outgoing Committee has worked hard this past year and dealt with some difficult issues but senses a reluctance by the general population to volunteer for an appointment to the Committee. We hope this overview, explaining our function, goals, and value to the community will cause you to become involved with us. Please volunteer. We need both commercial harvesters and members of the general public. We meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Town office the last Tuesday of each month. The public is always welcome.

Library Committee

The Library Committee continues to assess Townwide needs and help residents become more aware of the services, activities, and events provided by all three libraries for the community. The Committee includes representatives from Cundy's Harbor, Curtis Memorial and Orr's Island Libraries, as well as resident representatives of all of Harpswell.

We began our year with a brainstorming session about library services, both those existing and possible future services for Harpswell residents. Ideas ranged from giving input to the Agreement between the Town and Curtis Memorial Library, implementing the Comprehensive Plan as it regards libraries, and looking ahead at Long Range Planning, which we feel is essential for effective, efficient service to our residents. Broad topic areas covered are programs, outreach, publicity, information technology, facilities and operation.

For the third year, a children's summer program, sponsored by the Curtis Memorial Library and coordinated by members of the Library Committee, was held at the Kellogg Church. The event, in spite of cold weather, was enthusiastically attended. Children were given the opportunity to sign up for a library card and to take out books on that day.

Cooperation and strong support for each other continues among the three libraries. Cooperation among the three included joint publicity on brochures, participating in the Harpswell Festival, shared information and planning. The Committee supports the growing services provided by Cundy's Harbor and Orr's Island libraries and the broader resources of Curtis Memorial Library, whose extensive and specialized material as well as access to databases and the Internet, is Harpswell's full-service library.

Committee members are listed in the front of the Town Report. Selectman Gordon Weil is the Selectmen's liaison to the Committee. Curtis Library Director, Steve Podgajny, attended all meetings.